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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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News Release



<http://www.fws.gov/carlsbad>

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SERVICE PROPOSES CRITICAL HABITAT REVISION FOR ENDANGERED SAN BERNARDINO KANGAROO RAT

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced it is proposing to revise its designation of critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act for the endangered San Bernardino kangaroo rat. Approximately 9,079 acres of federal, local, and privately owned land in portions of Riverside and San Bernardino counties, California are included in the revised critical habitat proposal.

The San Bernardino kangaroo rat occurs in scattered, isolated patches of alluvial (loose, soft sand) sage-scrub habitat in portions of San Bernardino and Riverside counties in southern California. Three separate areas within the range of the species are being proposed as critical habitat. The three units include portions of the Santa Ana River Wash; Lytle and Cajon Creek Washes in San Bernardino County; and the San Jacinto River Wash in Riverside County.

Of the 9,079 acres included in the revised critical habitat proposal, the Service is considering excluding 2,544 acres from the final designation because they are already covered by an existing management plan that benefits the San Bernardino kangaroo rat. Lands proposed for exclusion from the final designation include areas within the Woolly-Star Preserve Area Management Plan, the Former Norton Air Force Base Conservation Management Plan, the Cajon Creek Habitat Conservation Management Area Habitat Enhancement and Management Plan, and areas covered by the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan.

As a result of a lawsuit, the Service designated critical habitat for the San Bernardino kangaroo rat in 2002. Approximately 33,295 acres of land in Riverside and San Bernardino counties were designated as critical habitat for the species.

Following publication of the 2002 final rule, a second lawsuit was filed against the Service by the Pacific Legal Foundation challenging the adequacy of the economic analysis, and delineation and justification of critical habitat for the San Bernardino kangaroo rat and 26 other species.

Today's announcement is in response to a settlement agreement that required the Service to complete a revised critical habitat proposal for the San Bernardino kangaroo rat by June 1, 2007. The kangaroo rat gets its name from large hind legs and feet that aid the tiny mammal when it jumps. The San Bernardino kangaroo rat is one of several subspecies of Merriam's kangaroo rat. It is considerably darker and smaller than other members of the subspecies. Kangaroo rats are only found in desert regions of the southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico.

The San Bernardino kangaroo rat is threatened by continued loss, degradation, and fragmentation of its habitat due to sand and gravel mining operations, flood control projects, and urban development. Three of the largest blocks of remaining habitat for the species are actively mined for sand and gravel, and mining activity in these areas is expected to increase.

A complete description of the Service's proposal to designate critical habitat for the San Bernardino kangaroo rat can be downloaded from the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office's website at http://www.fws.gov/carlsbad/SBKR_Docs.htm.

Data, information and comments should be submitted in writing to the Field Supervisor, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, California 92011. Comments will be accepted until August 20, 2007. Requests for a public hearing must be submitted in writing on or before August 3, 2007.

Comments may also be sent by electronic mail to **fw8cfwocomments@fws.gov**. Please submit comments in ASCII file format and avoid the use of special characters and encryption. Please include "Attn: San Bernardino kangaroo rat" in the subject line, and your name and return address in the body of your message.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 547 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American Tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to State fish and wildlife agencies.

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